(b) whether most of these tax payers are having income below Rs. 10 lakh;

(c) if so, what are the reasons for delay of issuing refund orders by 31st March, 2008; and

(d) how many refund orders in Delhi are pending as on 31 March, 2008 and by when all these tax payers will be issued refund orders?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Some delay is caused due to acute shortage of manpower as more than 25% of sanctioned posts are lying vacant in the department. In some cases, verification of taxes paid or deducted is required causing delay in issuing of the refund till verification process is over. The Income-Tax Department is trying to fill up these vacancies with the object of reducing the processing time. Computerized processing of returns has been introduced to ensure timely issuance of refund. In some cases refunds are delayed due to reasons attributable to assessees, like—

(i) Non-quoting/wrong quoting of PAN number by the assessee.

(ii) Non-furnishing of bank account details by the assessee.

(iii) Incorrect/different addresses given in the Income Tax Returns.

(iv) Pending de-duplication of PAN.

(d) about 2.91 lakhs refund cases are to be processed for returns filed during the F.Y. 2007-08. Normally, returns are processed with in four months of receipt. However, the statutory time limit for processing of the returns filed during the F.Y. 2007-08 is 31st March, 2009. It has always been the endeavour of the department to issue refunds to the tax payers on priority at the earliest.

Suicides by Farmers

4219. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the reported continuing farmers suicide in Vidarbha region, Maharashtra, due to inability to pay back loans during April, 2008;

(b) if so, the details of action taken including the debt of farmers as loan taken from various sources as on today, State-wise, category-wise; and

(c) the measures taken to give reflief to farmers from above debt menace?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (c) To provide relief to the farmers in the 31 districts of Maharashtra (6 districts in Vidarbha), Andhra Pradesh (AP), Karnataka and Kerala, where a large number of farmers have committed suicide supposedly due to agricultural indebtedness, the Government has implemented a comprehensive Debt Relief Package. Thr package provided waiver of entire interest on overdue loans as on 1.7.2006 such that all farmers had no past interest burden as on that date. Further, the overdue loans of the farmers as on 1.7.2006 has been rescheduled over a period of 3-5 years with a one year moratorium and additional credit flow has been ensured during the years 2006-07 and 2007-08 to these farmers who have been made eligible for fresh loans.

Interest amounting to Rs. 3,642 crore approx. (Rs. 834.22 crore, Rs. 1,952.84 crore, Rs. 640.80 crore and Rs. 214.12 crore in Maharashtra, A.P., Karnataka and Kerala respectively) have been waived while loans worth Rs. 10,696 crore (Rs. 1,384 crore, 7,260 crore, 1,249 and Rs. 803 crore in Maharashtra, A.P., Karantaka and Kerala respectively) have been rescheduled in these districts.

Besides, in the Union Budget 2008-09, the Government has announced a Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme for farmers, which stipulates waiver of all loans disbursed by Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Cooperative Credit Institutions before 31.3.2007, that were overdue on 31.12.2007 and which remained unpaid until 29.2.2008 for small farmers (land holding between 1 and 2 hecatares) and marginal farmers (land holding upto 1 hectare). In respect of other farmers (land holding more than 2 hecatares), there is a One Time Settlement (OTS) Scheme for all loans that were overdue on 31.12.2007 and which remained unpaid until 29.2.2008. The OTS provides a rebate of 25% against payment of the balance amount of 75%. Government estimates that about three crore small and marginal farmers and about one crore other farmers including the farmers of Vidarbha, whose loans are overdue on 31.12.2007 will benefit from the scheme.

Cases of bogus caste certificates in nationalised banks

4220. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware about the recent judgement delivered in the case of Yogesh Ramchandra Naikwadi who claimed to be Scheduled Tribe on the basis of bogus caste certificate; and

(b) if so, what action is proposed by the Ministry on the hundreds of bogus caste certificate cases in Nationalised Banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Exemption of taxes in Sikkim

4221. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:
SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether certain groups of citizens who call themselves as original Indians in Sikkim, have represented against discrimination in respect of exemption from taxes as compared to the rest of population in Sikkim;

(b) if so, whether any inquiry has been held or planned to be held;

(c) whether any such inquiry has revealed any discrimination;

(d) if so, the action taken thereon; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Representations have been received from certain groups of